



Final Evaluation Report on Equitable Expansion of High-Impact Practices
University of Wisconsin System
Prepared for Lumina Foundation
February 2021

Introduction

In 2018 with support from Lumina Foundation, the National Association of System Heads (NASH) launched an effort with 4 public college and university systems and 22 campuses to demonstrate how a coordinated approach could expand high-impact practices in an equitable manner.¹ NASH was well-positioned to lead this effort, which built upon their Taking Student Success to Scale (TS3) initiative to build sustainable change into the fabric of systems and campuses.²

“High-Impact Practices,” a term popularized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities through its Liberal Education and America’s Promise initiative and researched over time by many researchers using data from NSSE and elsewhere, refers to a set of educational practices that result in higher student engagement.³ The most common high-impact practices (HIPs) are those promoted by AAC&U and include first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning, ePortfolios, service learning or community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects.⁴ For over a decade, researchers have developed a robust evidence base on the benefits of high-impact practices for students in terms of their academic engagement, attainment, and learning outcomes.⁵ A widely referenced study by Ashley Finley and Tia McNair that found variation in HIP participation among Black, Hispanic, Asian, and White students; and further documented that perceived

¹ A second focus of this effort was to expand the systematic measurement of direct student learning outcomes.

² Martin, R.R. (2017) Taking Student Success to Scale. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49:1, 38-47.

³ Kuh, George D. (2008). High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

⁴ See <https://www.aacu.org/node/4084> Accessed December 2, 2020.

⁵ Brownell, J. & Swaner, L.E.. (2010). Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kuh, G. D, O'Donnell, K., & Reed, S. (2013). Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

learning gains for Black and Hispanic students were significantly higher when they engaged in multiple HIPs.⁶

A key goal for this project was to accelerate system and campus efforts to increase participation in HIPs by Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, who are less likely to participate in many of these learning opportunities that can positively impact student success. The idea behind the Lumina-NASH project was to leveraging state systems to scale high quality educational experiences of high-impact practices into the higher education infrastructure.

The Wisconsin Context

The University of Wisconsin System (UWS) encompasses 13 institutions of higher education, across 26 campuses including two research universities and eleven comprehensive universities. In fall 2017, The UWS enrolled almost 175,000 students, including 5,270 African American, 9,766 Hispanic, 3,181 Southeast Asian, 3,871 other Asian American, and 628 Native American students.⁷

UWS was considered a promising system to advance HIP participation, in part because of its participation in the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) national public advocacy and campus action initiative of the American Association of Colleges & Universities. Additionally, the UWS strategic framework - entitled 2020FWD - includes the U2 initiative as one of three signature student success initiatives intended to transform the educational experiences of UW students enrolled throughout the system. U2 is dedicated to ensuring that all UW students have the opportunity to participate in at least two HIPs.⁸

The UWS effort was led by the Office of Academic Programs and Faculty Advancement, which engages faculty in communities of practice to problematize equity, diversity, and inclusion in the service of meaningful learning for all students in the UW system.⁹ The University of Wisconsin System identified five partner institutions to “create HIPs pathways to expand HIPs across institutional curricula to increase access and to address equity gaps for underserved students.”¹⁰

- University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
- University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- University of Wisconsin-Parkside
- University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

⁶ Finley, A. and McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing Underserved Students’ Engagement in High-Impact Practices*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

⁷ Headcount enrollment from 2018-18 UW System Factbook.

[https://www.wisconsin.edu/download/publications\(2\)/Fact-Book.pdf](https://www.wisconsin.edu/download/publications(2)/Fact-Book.pdf) Accessed December 2, 2020.

⁸ UWS Proposal for NASH-Lumina HIPs initiative, October 31, 2017

⁹ <https://www.wisconsin.edu/offices/office-of-academic-and-student-affairs/academic-programs-faculty-advancement/#overview> Accessed December 2, 2020.

¹⁰ UWS Objectives and Goals Statement Worksheet. These worksheets were completed by all systems after the January 2018 kickoff meeting in Los Angeles, California.

These five partner institutions enrolled almost 55,000 undergraduate students in Fall 2019, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, including 2,506 Asian students, 2,503 Black or African American students, and 5,167 Hispanic or Latinx students.¹¹ Each of the partner institutions selected one or more HIPs to focus on during this project, including community-based learning, internships, undergraduate research, first year seminar, capstone, and study abroad.

This final evaluation report uses data from the National Survey of Student Engagement to measure HIP participation prior to the beginning of the grant (pre-2018) and after the grant period ended (2020). Additionally, the report spotlights University of Wisconsin-Parkside using qualitative data from an in-depth site visit and draws on interviews with UWS and campus leaders to provide insights into factors that contributed to progress in expanding HIP participation in Wisconsin.

Participation in High-Impact Practices

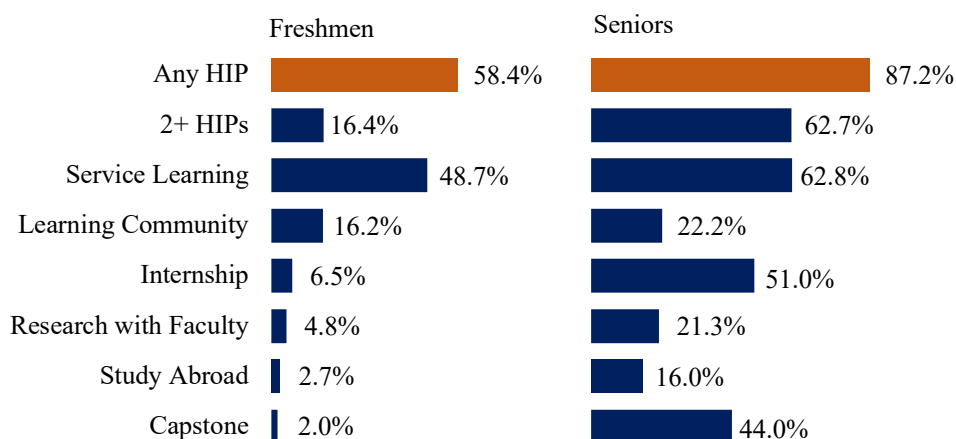
High-impact practices were widespread among the five participating UWS institutions according to students who responded to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The UWS does not have a uniform mechanism for colleges to report student participation in HIPs; as such, NSSE survey data are the most comprehensive tool available to track HIP participation in Wisconsin.

The NSSE collects data on six high-impact practices: 1) learning community, 2) service learning, 3) research with faculty, 4) internship or field experience, 5) study abroad, and 6) culminating senior experience or capstone. Data from the 2014 and 2017 NSSE administrations were used to document baseline participation, while data from the 2020 administration were used to document post-project participation. Across these three NSSE administration years, approximately 16,000 students at these five institutions responded to survey questions related to HIP participation; among these respondents, 72% are White, 4% are Black, 5% are Hispanic, and 0.5% are American Indian.

Baseline participation

Prior to the launch of the Lumina-NASH HIPs project, 87% of seniors across the five participating institutions in Wisconsin, and 58% of freshmen, reported participating in at least one high-impact practice, according to NSSE data from the 2014 and 2017 administration years. There was considerable variation in HIP participation rates among the participating institutions, ranging from 46% to 67% participation in any HIP among freshmen, and from 83% to 94% among seniors. Consistent with national trends, the most common HIP for both seniors and freshmen was service learning: 63% of seniors reported participating in service learning at baseline as did 49% of freshmen. Among seniors, internships were the second most common HIP (51% reported participation) and a culminating senior experience was the third most common HIP (44% reported participation). Among freshmen, learning communities was the second most common HIP (16% reported participation) followed by internships (7% reported participation).

¹¹ Calculations by DVP-PRAXIS LTD. Data accessed December 2, 2020 from College Navigator, <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>



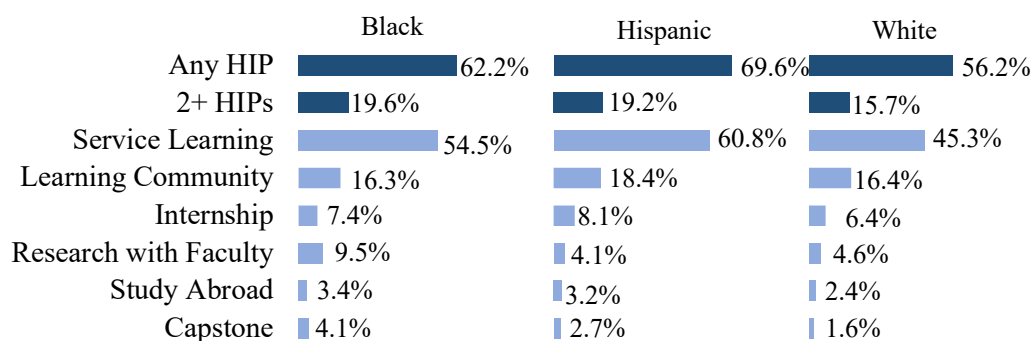
The baseline analysis also examined HIP participation by Black and Hispanic students,¹² who were more likely to report participation in at least one HIP among freshmen: 62% of Black freshmen across these five participating institutions reported participation in at least one HIP as did 70% of Hispanic freshmen, which is considerably higher than the 56% of White freshmen who reported participation in at least one HIP. Moreover, roughly 20% of both Black and Hispanic freshmen participated in 2 or more HIPs according to NSSE data compared with 16% of White freshmen. By comparison, among seniors, White and Hispanic students (88%) were more likely to report participation in at least one HIP compared with 85% of Black seniors. White seniors were also more likely to report participation in 2 or more HIPs (65%) compared with 59% of Hispanic seniors and 54% of Black seniors. In short, at baseline among these five participating universities, Black and Hispanic freshmen were more likely to report participation 2 or more HIPs, whereas among seniors, White students were more likely to report participating in 2 or more HIPs.

Freshmen participation in HIPs for Black and Hispanic students was driven by service learning. More than half of Black (55%) and Hispanic (61%) freshmen reported participation in service learning compared with 45% of White freshmen. Hispanic freshmen also reported higher participation in learning community (18%) compared with 16% of both White and Black freshmen.

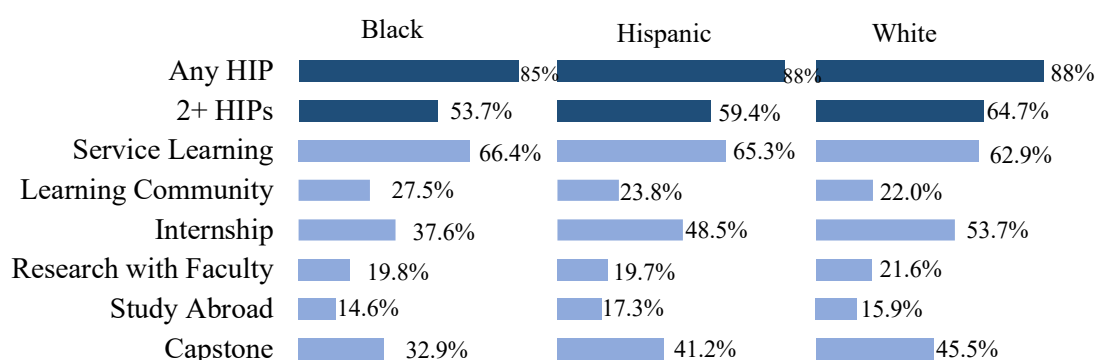
Among seniors, reported participation in service learning by Black (66%) and Hispanic (65%) students was slightly higher at baseline compared with White seniors (63%). Black (28%) and Hispanic (24%) seniors also reported higher participation in learning community compared with White seniors (22%). In contrast, participation for Black and Hispanic seniors in research with faculty (20%), internships or field experiences (38% and 49% respectively), and culminating senior experience (33% and 41% respectively) was lower than participation among White seniors: 22% reported participation in research with faculty, 54% reported internships or field experience, and 46% reported participation in a culminating senior experience.

¹² Small sample sizes for American Indian students prevents their inclusion in this analysis.

Freshmen HIP Participation



Senior HIP Participation



Were there gains in HIP participation during the Lumina-NASH project?

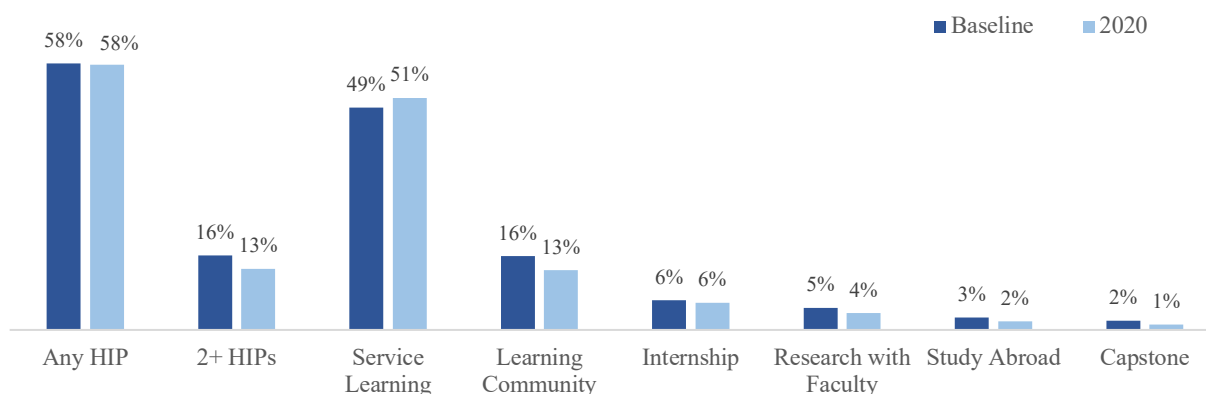
A central goal of the Lumina-NASH project was to expand equitable participation in HIPs by working through systems. To document trends in HIP participation, data from the 2020 NSSE administration was compared with the baseline data from the 2014 and 2017 NSSE administrations (reported above).

Among the five participating institutions in the UWS, overall participation in at least one HIP among freshmen and seniors was flat in 2020 compared with baseline: 88% of seniors in 2020 reported participation in at least one HIP as did 58% of freshmen, according to NSSE data. Among the five participating institutions, for both freshmen and seniors, NSSE data in 2020 indicate flat or slightly declining participation for learning community, research with faculty, internships or field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experience.

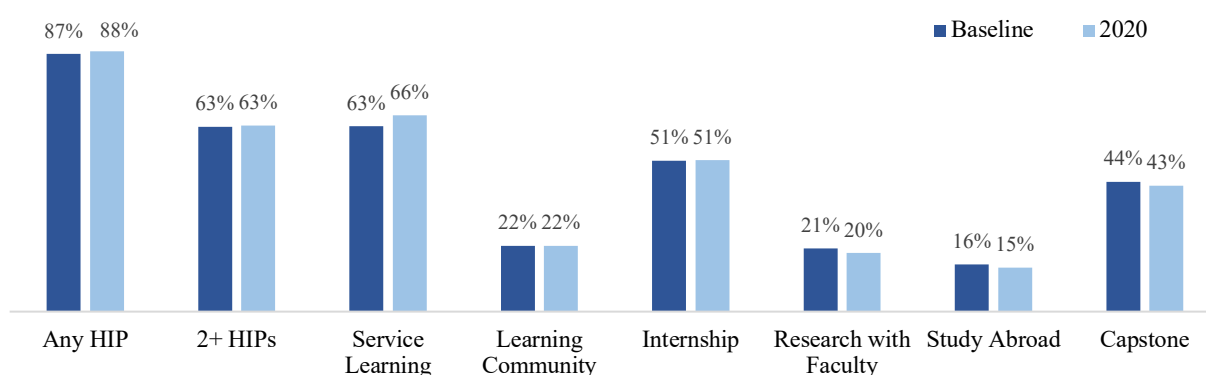
A consistent and positive overall trend in HIP participation is for service learning.

Freshmen across all five participating UWS institutions reported a 2-percentage point higher HIP participation in service learning and seniors reported a 3-percentage point increase in participation in service learning in 2020 compared with baseline: an increase from 49% to 51% among freshmen and from 63% to 66% among seniors. This trend held true for both freshmen and seniors at UW-Eau Claire, UW-Parkside, and UW-Whitewater, and for seniors at UW-Green Bay and UW-Milwaukee. UW-Parkside focused on service learning (i.e., community-based learning) through this project, and we spotlight them later in this report.

Freshmen - All Students



Seniors - All Students



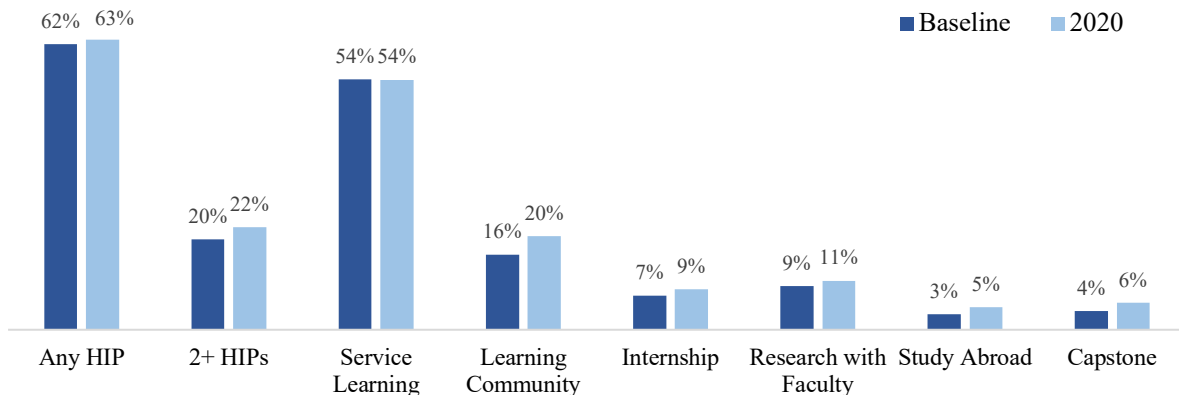
Notably, Black and Hispanic students—who had relatively high participation rates in service-learning at baseline—both saw increases in participation in this HIP in 2020.

Although participation rates in service-learning for Black freshmen held relatively steady in 2020, Black seniors saw a notable increase in participation rates from 66% at baseline to 71% in 2020. For Hispanic students, increases in service-learning participation were evident for both freshmen (from 61% to 63%) and for seniors (from 65% to 68%); service-learning is the only HIP where we see expanded participation between baseline and 2020 among Hispanic students.

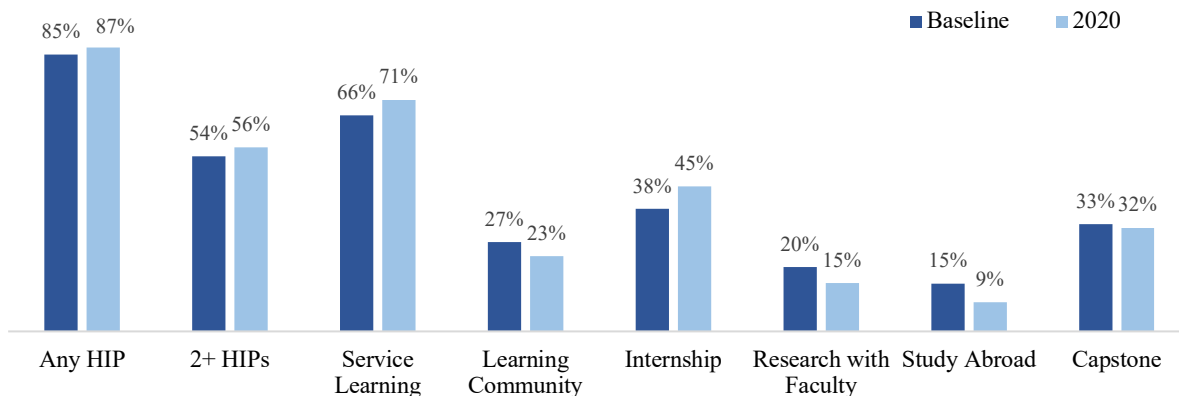
In addition, there were modest gains in Black student participation in two or more HIPs for both freshmen and seniors in 2020 compared with baseline: Black freshmen participation in two or more HIPs increased 2-percentage points, from 20% at baseline to 22% in 2020; and, Black senior participation two or more HIPs also increased by 2-percentage points from 54% at baseline to 56% in 2020. These gains were largely driven by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as the sample of Black students who responded to the NSSE at the other four participating campuses is too small to reliably confirm trends in HIP participation by race and ethnicity. Even so, this trend is promising in terms of equitable HIP participation among Black students. The NSSE data from UW-Milwaukee further suggest that gains in overall Black

freshmen participation in HIPs is driven by participation in learning community, whereas the gains for Black seniors in HIP participation is driven by service learning and internships. Again, because UW-Milwaukee accounts for the majority of Black students in the sample across the five institutions, these patterns are mirrored in the aggregate data as well. In their final campus report to NASH, UW-Milwaukee indicated they increased first-year seminars by 33% from 2018 to 2019, and focused outreach and promotion to under-represented students and students who had not yet declared a major; these efforts likely contributed to gains in Black freshmen participation in a variety of HIPs documented by the NSSE data. Gains in internship participation among Black seniors at UW-Milwaukee are especially large – an increase of 13-percentage points from 32% to 45%. Internships were not a focus of the NASH-Lumina project at UW-Milwaukee so the evaluation did not collect qualitative data related to this HIP at UW-Milwaukee; we therefore cannot offer any contextual insights for this notable increase in internship participation among Black seniors in 2020 compared with baseline.

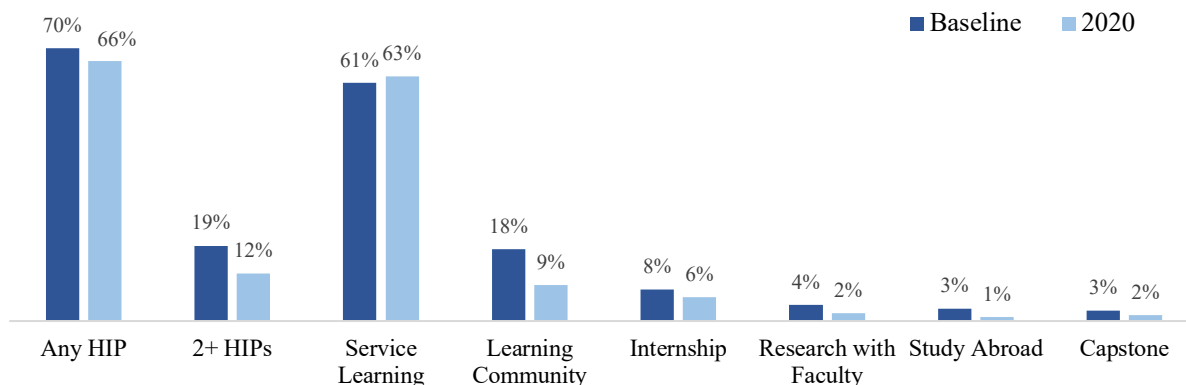
Freshmen - Black Students



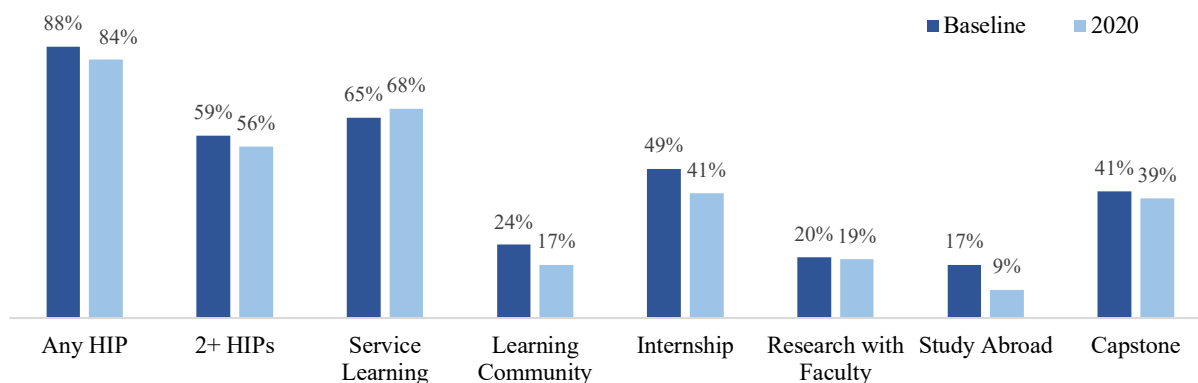
Seniors - Black Students



Freshmen - Hispanic Students



Seniors - Hispanic Students



Spotlight on UW-Parkside

The University of Wisconsin-Parkside (UW-Parkside) is a racially and ethnically diverse campus in the UWS. According to the National Center for Education Statistics College Navigator, almost 4,000 undergraduates and 600 master’s students enrolled at UW-Parkside in Fall 2019 – about one-third of whom were Asian (4%), Black or African American (8%), and Hispanic or Latinx (19%).¹³

During the Lumina-NASH project, UW-Parkside saw considerable gains in freshmen and senior participation in at least one HIP: an increase of 5-percentage points among freshmen from 52% to 57% in 2020 compared with baseline, and an increase of 4-percentage points among seniors from 83% to 87%. The 2020 NSSE data also show gains for both freshmen and seniors in service learning, which was a priority for the campus during this project. Freshmen reported a 6-percentage point increase in service-learning participation from 44% at baseline to 50% in 2020, and seniors reported a 3-percentage point increase in service-learning participation from 65% to

¹³ <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=Georgia+Gwinnett&s=all&id=447689#enrolmt> Accessed December 2, 2020.

68%. Notably – this increase in service-learning participation was experienced among Black and Hispanic students as well as White students: from 38% to 45% among Black freshmen and from 55% to 59% among Hispanic freshmen. Expanding participation in community-based learning (CBL) was the primary focus of UW-Parkside during this project, which aligns with these notable increases by freshmen and seniors in service-learning participation. NSSE data also indicate gains among seniors participating in internships; internships were another focus of their grant efforts.

In their final campus report to NASH, UW-Parkside indicated they strategically chose to focus on community-based learning through this project, because it was “a practice that was already embedded within the culture of our campus.”¹⁴ The report further indicated they “had been training faculty and supporting CBL since the late 1990s and had built a significant number of CBL courses, a certificate program and a strong group of faculty engaging in the work;” UW-Parkside had also recently offered a CBL professional development program for faculty in the summers of 2016 and 2017, and had an “active faculty steering committee.” Put simply, UW-Parkside had existing momentum and campus-level buy-in to expand service-learning participation as it was already embedded in their academic and strategic plans. In fact, as a campus, their goal mirrored the UWS 2020FWD goal of all students experiencing at least 2 HIPs by graduation, with an explicit focus on underrepresented minoritized students.

Tying the project goals to the academic and strategic plans meant that UW-Parkside was “able to get people to give the time and effort needed,” and could “justify campus investment in the work with additional funding well beyond the amount of the grant.”¹⁵ Field notes from our evaluation visit indicate UW-Parkside’s focus on community-based learning is founded upon the campus’ strong tradition of community engagement and robust administrative capacity through the Office of Community and Business Engagement, that has three full-time administrative staff overseeing CBL and internships. Given its long history of CBL, UW-Parkside decided to focus on quality in their service-learning HIP, developing a formal CBL course designation process and piloting a rubric on student learning outcomes for CBL adapted from AAC&U’s VALUE Rubric. Through this project, UW-Parkside sought to standardize definitions and set minimum expectations for CBL and internship courses – including a formal course designation process for CBL – that would ensure the CBL that students experience are of high quality.

The evaluation team conducted a site visit to UW-Parkside in September 2019 to learn about their efforts to expand HIP participation in community-based learning (CBL) and work-based experiences (e.g., internships). During the site visit to UW-Parkside, the evaluation team interviewed 15 administrators and faculty about these efforts to examine implementation factors known to affect progress: executive-level commitment, distributed leadership, faculty ownership, resource prioritization, and utilization of data.¹⁶

¹⁴ University of Wisconsin-Parkside Final Campus Report to NASH, December 20, 2019.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Price, D.V., McMaken, J., and Kioukis, G. (June 2015). Case-Informed Lessons for Scaling Innovation at Community and Technical Colleges. DVP-PRAXIS LTD <https://www.dvp-praxis.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Catalyst-Fund-Evaluation-Report-FINAL-060815.pdf>

MDRC (Spring 2014). *The Logic of Creating Effective System Change*. New York.

Kezar, A. (February 2011). What is the best way to achieve broader reach of improved practices in higher education? *Innovation in Higher Education* 36: 235-247. DOI 10.1007/s10755-011-9174-z

Evaluative data from the site visit to UW-Parkside point to a strong institutional commitment to expanding service-learning and internships demonstrated by 1) the inclusion of HIPs in the academic and strategic plan, 2) executive-level leadership from academic affairs with distributed responsibility for implementation across departments and schools, 3) strong faculty ownership and broad faculty participation for CBL implementation, and 4) institutional resource prioritization to support administrative capacity for HIPs and faculty professional development and leadership with a focus on equity. These institutional attributes may help explain why freshmen participation in service-learning increased by 6-percentage points in 2020 compared with baseline, as did senior participation in service learning (+3 percentage points) and internships (+2 percentage points).

UW-Parkside charged a cross-functional team with project management responsibilities that was spearheaded by the Office of Community and Business Engagement (OCBE) and empowered two faculty-led working groups to lead the CBL and internship implementation work. Vice-Provosts from both academic and student affairs were members of the HIPs leadership team, with the Provost and Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs especially engaged and informed about the work. Most project team members had taken on these efforts without reduction of other responsibilities; however, the project lead and key support staff were full-time administrative staff in the OCBE. In addition, faculty directors for CBL and internship committees served on the HIPs leadership team and received course release time as acknowledgement of the time commitment connected with their faculty director responsibilities. Along with these faculty leaders, the core project leadership team also included the Director of the Teaching and Learning Center, the Director of the OCBE, the Assistant Provost of Student Success, and a key institutional research leader for the college. Put simply, **this project to expand HIPs benefitted from considerable executive-level commitment and broadly distributed leadership – two essential factors for effective implementation.**

The evaluation team also observed **significant faculty ownership of UW-Parkside’s efforts to expand CBL and internships.** The faculty-led CBL Steering Committee had been in place for many years prior to the Lumina-NASH project, and the internship implementation team formed during the Lumina-NASH project became a formal Internship Steering Committee in Fall 2019, modeled after the faculty CBL committee. These official institutional committees are each led by a faculty director who is compensated via course release time, which signifies the campus’ prioritization of their efforts. These faculty director roles are institution-funded (not grant funded) and continued beyond the grant itself. The CBL and internship committees have representation from all four colleges of UW-Parkside, which was described as an intentional decision to ensure campus-wide participation and dissemination. Many faculty take advantage of professional development opportunities that include stipends for participation. For example, the university funds an intensive 3-week course on culturally responsive teaching which continues into the fall semester via monthly meetings. In addition, UW-Parkside funds eight CBL faculty fellows (two from each college) to engage in a year-long program that includes a summer workshop on teaching high-quality community-based learning courses as well as a variety of other CBL-focused efforts throughout the academic year; these fellows are paid \$2,000 for their participation in the year-long program funded by the university. Also, in summer of 2019, UW-

Parkside introduced the first faculty internship workshop, which was offered in an on-line format in 2020; faculty were paid for their participation in these internship trainings. Collectively, these formal committees and stipends for faculty have increased faculty participation and buy-in for CBL and internships, representing a third key factor driving implementation success.

These evaluative observations also reveal how **expanding HIPs – specifically service learning (CBL) and internships – are prioritized by UW-Parkside as demonstrated in terms of both institutional investments and alignment with core initiatives.** The goals related to HIP participation are explicit in UW-Parkside’s academic and strategic plan and are clearly connected with the institution’s “bold goal” of increasing the number of graduates by 50%. The university has committed to CBL and internships through funding three administrative positions within the Office of Community and Business Engagement and is providing institutional resources to support faculty serving as directors on two standing HIPs committees (course release time). In addition, CBL faculty who have their courses designated and who complete a formal evaluation of student learning receive \$500 each time they teach the CBL course. UW-Parkside also provided paid professional development opportunities for faculty related to Lumina-NASH project goals and made a conscious effort to embed issues of equity in all training that was offered; for example, UW-Parkside ramped up the racial equity and inclusion training in their CBL Fellows program and also intentionally included equity-related training in the faculty internship workshop. The institutional resources committed to these efforts far exceed project grant funding and signal the importance of expanding HIPs equitably as a campus priority.

UW-Parkside has traditionally relied on NSSE data to explore HIP participation and disparities among different racial and ethnic groups, and they participated in the HIPs quality modules pilot with NSSE. A major objective during the Lumina-NASH project was to establish clear criteria for what constitutes a high quality CBL course and credit-bearing internships. The expectation is that faculty-generated standards for HIPs would ensure quality and allow for local tracking and monitoring of participation.

Evaluative Observations of UWS Efforts to Expand HIPs Equitably

The UWS sought to expand HIPs by leveraging longstanding instructional and professional development programs that have been collaboratively designed and delivered by UWS universities, such as the expertise and infrastructure of the Teaching and Learning Centers on each campus. Through these efforts, UWS wanted to identify a “set of qualities that [the universities] could all agree upon and that best represented expectations about HIPs.”¹⁷ Throughout this project, the UWS, through its Office of Academic Programs and Faculty Advancement, facilitated system-wide and campus-specific convenings to discuss HIP implementation and goal setting. At the system level, achieving consensus on the four qualities of HIPs as a system was identified in the final system report to NASH as “the big takeaway” for the project.

As documented by NSSE data, progress in service-learning participation was observed for the participating institutions during the 2-year Lumina-NASH project. Community-based learning was a primary focus for 3 of 5 UWS universities: UWS institutions saw a 2-percentage point

¹⁷ UWS Final Report to NASH for Lumina TS3 Project, December 30, 2019.

gain in participation by freshmen and a 3-percentage point gain by seniors in service-learning in 2020 compared to baseline. Notably from an equity lens, Black freshmen and seniors reported gains in participation in 2 or more HIPs, which is driven by UW-Parkside and UW-Milwaukee - the two most diverse campuses in the UWS.

A strength of the UWS is the strategic goal of every student completing at least 2 HIPs by graduation. This system-level goal translated universally to participating campuses to enumerate HIP participation goals for their own institution, and at several universities such goals are prominently featured within strategic planning documents. UWS leadership has also been responsive to campus leadership around equity, incorporating campus-level input on equity into future convenings and communications, and adopting equity as a key dimension in the emerging system-level definition of high-quality HIPs. Notably, while campuses were bringing the system along in terms of pushing the equity imperative, UWS leadership around HIPs also helped the campuses develop language around equity and interrogate the meaning of equitable pedagogy. In their final report, UWS emphasized the value of becoming “reflective practitioners” with the campuses through this project and noted that they appreciated the time to “step back and critically examine” the work that institutions are moving forward with HIPs.¹⁸

These early and incremental accomplishments can be accelerated with continued alignment between system- and campus-level strategies to expand HIP participation, and more concerted efforts to leverage the system’s “power of convening.” For example, the UWS could enhance engagement with faculty across all 13 UWS universities, building on the usefulness of campus-specific workshops and professional development offered through the Office of Professional and Instructional Development (OPID) that focused on assessment, rubric-based approaches to measuring student learning, and defining quality HIPs. These efforts could be strengthened by moving beyond “brainstorming and discussion” and toward enumerating explicit goals for delivering high quality HIPs equitably and identifying strategies to achieve them that the UWS could support.

¹⁸ UWS Final Report to NASH for Lumina TS3 Project, December 30, 2019.